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A palatial Spanish venue, three stunning gowns and a Michelin-starred chef... designer Zoë Onions pulled out all the stops for her dream wedding

Ultimate FANTASY BRIDE



FROM TOP The historic Casino de Madrid in Spain was beautifully decorated by florist Tony Marklew; the bride and groom cutting the seven-tier wedding cake; Zoë soaking up all the 'love'



The proposal was in China with roses galore, Champagne aplenty and a 16-carat diamond ring. Clearly, the wedding itself was never going to be a low-key affair.

Blogger bride and designer Zoë Onions had a year and a half to plot her fantastical three-day event, which would culminate in a ceremony attended by nearly 200 guests and be held within Spain's beyond-palatial Casino de Madrid (which is not an actual casino). Oh, and King Juan Carlos was guest of honour.

Zoë, 33, founder of quirky accessories brand Peonica London, chose Madrid for the city's "elegant buzz and fabulous cuisine". She met her new husband Mo

El Husseiny, founder of internet investment company Ventura, at a Knightsbridge gym four years ago, which she describes as a "serendipity moment". Their eyes locked over a cross trainer, with Zoë blushing and Mo inviting her for a juice. "We spoke about travel, which resulted in us exchanging email addresses," she tells HFM. The ultra-glamorous jet-setting couple now divide their time between London, where Lancashire and Shropshire-raised Zoë's handbags are produced, and Dubai, where Mo's business is based.

"I was very lucky that my Mo left the majority of the wedding decision-making

to me, which meant that I could plan my dream day," Zoë admits. Every detail was considered meticulously, from the double Michelin-starred chef to the bride's three designer gowns – with enough sparkle for 10 weddings. "It was unimaginably rewarding to see Zoë receive the fairytale wedding that she deserved," the proud groom tells us. If you're planning a decadent no-holds-barred wedding, here's how Zoë pulled off hers...

Start as you mean to go on (with the bar well and truly raised).

"The venue was our starting point because it was the most important element of the wedding planning. We wanted a setting that could hold the ceremony, Champagne reception, dinner and also the party – so guests didn't have to move from place to place. My friend sent me photos of the Casino de Madrid and I instantly knew it was perfect. I fell in love with the stunning baroque staircase with its beautiful, intricate floral detailing, but also the spectacular dining room with its elaborate chandeliers and beautiful paintings."

The invites for a wedding of this magnitude should by no means be an *arrière-pensée*.

"It was very difficult to find unique, elegant invitations but I eventually found a Vera Wang design that was unusual but elegant. The invitations were oval-shaped with gold-leaf edging and had lovely details such as matching silk-lined, gold-leaf envelopes. They actually took much longer to make than expected, so in hindsight this should have been at the very top of my wedding-planning list." ►





Zoë's wedding was a three-day extravaganza. Her Vera Wang gown was the first of three designer dresses that she wore on the day

Recruit a florist with a strong Instagram following and an A-list clientele.

"We used London-based florist Tony Marklew, who was inspired by our venue. He incorporated a romantic collection of blush pinks highlighted by gold foliage. In the ballroom, simple glass vases were transformed with silver leaf, silk flowers and crystals, to emulate the crystal chandeliers. Tony also created an incredible ambience with flowers at my flamenco-themed hen dinner at Annabel's. I miss meeting him for coffee to talk about flowers."

Tabletops are the perfect habitat for showcasing splendour.

"The tables were adorned with vintage candelabra and a sea of candles. All the tableware and furniture served as a subtle backdrop to our playful colour palette. The mirrored tables augmented the candlelight and reflected the flowers and the ceiling."

Three dresses are better than one!

"I had three wedding dresses. For the ceremony I wore a Vera Wang gown with flowing silk tulle petals and a custom-designed veil. For the dinner it was an embellished, angel-shaped cape dress by Lebanese couture designer Mikael D. And for the party I wore a really fun Valentino silk mesh dress over an Oscar de la Renta skirt. My footwear throughout was a pair of silk Oscar de la Renta shoes with bows."

Coordinate your wedding party's wardrobes.

"My husband wore white tie from Gieves & Hawkes. My bridesmaids wore a combination of dresses by Alex Perry, one of my favourite Australian designers; his designs are elegant, chic and flattering. They all carried white Peonica London Amour bags."

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue...

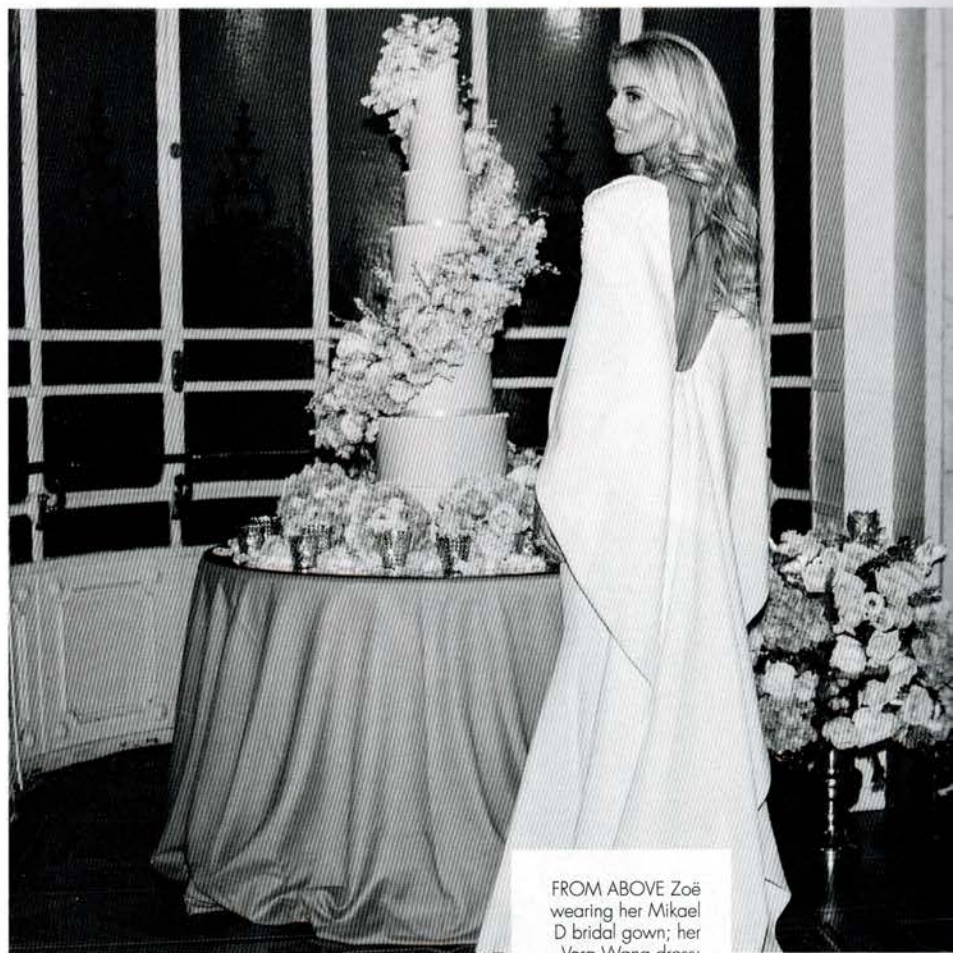
"Something old was my grandmother's diamond bracelet, lent to me by my mother, who also gave me a new diamond necklace. I borrowed diamond earrings from my mother-in-law, who also gave me a blue evil eye brooch that I clipped into my wedding dress."

Consider the finer details.

"Some of my most memorable moments included the opera singing and ballerinas dancing. Also, the ginger rose for dessert (a real rose filled with delicate sweetened ginger and dry ice) was delicious. The 'Z&M'-themed fireworks, neon heart sign around the entrance and the ice sculpture were also very special."

Have a showstopper up your sleeve.

"We had a Champagne stack. Opening the Nebuchadnezzar [equal to 20 standard bottles] bottle of Moët & Chandon proved



FROM ABOVE Zoë wearing her Mikael D bridal gown; her Vera Wang dress; the Oscar de la Renta shoes she wore throughout; the white Peonica London Amour bags carried by her bridesmaids; florist Tony Marklew created a romantic ambience with blush-pink flowers, crystals and candles

to be trickier than expected, and it took us quite a few attempts. It was an amusing sight watching one of my husband's friends in a kilt trying to open this giant bottle. When we finally succeeded, the Champagne cascading down the stacks of glasses looked amazing."

Each phase of the wedding requires its own genre of entertainment.

"We had flamenco dancers during the cocktails, ballerinas during dinner and Disco Bunny Girls at the party. And finally DJ Amazonica provided music well into the night."

Enrol a Michelin-starred chef.

"Double Michelin-starred chef Paco Roncero was there on the day to supervise his fabulous culinary team. He's

renowned in Spain for his exquisite cooking – he created an amazing gastro menu for us. Dishes included Paco's signature canapé vegetable garden, which sat alongside a giant garden urn, a raspberry amuse-bouche, pea foam with prawns on olive oil soup, courgette noodles with lobster and pesto sauce and sirloin beef with wheat and mushrooms with truffle butter."

Plan a decent honeymoon to bypass the wedding blues.

"We're going to St Barts to combine relaxation, sun and rest and then on to New York to spend time with friends." **HFM**

'I INSTANTLY KNEW THE CASINO DE MADRID WAS THE PERFECT VENUE'

